

Public News Service  
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### **Taking the Classroom to Acadia National Park this Fall**

BAR HARBOR, Maine - School will be back in session soon and, this fall, some middle-school students will be leaving their more traditional, indoor classrooms to explore and learn in a different setting - the great outdoors. They'll travel to Acadia National Park to learn about subjects ranging from marine and forest studies, to mapping and astronomy, with park rangers assisting their teachers.

It's a unique partnership between the National Park Service, Friends of Acadia and the retailer L.L. Bean. Georgiana Piete, a sixth-grade science teacher from Hampden, took a group to the park last fall and says the program enhanced the lessons she taught in class.

"It takes the classroom learning and relates it to the real world. They get to not just read about, or even look at pictures in books - they actually touch it, they feel it and it involves them."

Janet Wyper, community relations manager for L.L. Bean, says the Maine-based retailer was happy to participate with Acadia in the public-private partnership.

"Promoting the public's activities in our natural spaces, particularly those on federal and state parks - it was a no-brainer to hook up with something that was not only innovative, but good for everybody involved."

The other facet of the education partnership is Friends of Acadia, an independent nonprofit group working to protect and preserve the park. Marla O'Byrne, the group's chief executive officer, points out that, like many national parks, Acadia is under-funded. Private donations, which are matched by the federal government, are essential to its future.

"What we'd like to see is an effort to increase the opportunities for private donations to leverage additional funds from the federal government."

U.S. national parks are maintained with a combination of federal funds, grants and private donations, she explains. Currently, the park system is operating with a federal shortfall of \$600 million.

The Acadia program is part of a national effort to add public-private funding partnerships to benefit both parks and students. Advocates are looking to Congress to authorize and continue funding such programs, so that students at Acadia and around the country can continue to participate in educational activities.